

CPR Hopes to Make It After Real Infighting

Center and Journal Offer A What's What in Capital

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At the Center for Political Research, it's understood that nobody has been fired in nearly a month.

And at CPR—one of Washington's newest research and publishing operations—that fact alone could be significant. Because since its inception more than a year ago, CPR and its National Journal have been torn by almost continual internal upheaval.

But there are other signs of stability:

- Starting in mid-March, National Journal will be sent only to paid subscribers. About 3,000 copies have been sent free every week since the magazine began publishing last November.

- Solicitation of subscriptions has been proceeding slowly. Out of the first 1,800 solicitations in recent weeks, about 300 paid subscriptions have resulted at rates—depending on the type of subscription—from \$200 to \$1,050 a year. The highest price includes some research service.

- Every government department has a subscription, the company says, and they range from one copy of the magazine to as many as 16 at a single agency (the White House gets 16). More than 50 members of Congress—and 5 Senate and 4 House committees—are subscribers.

It was perhaps the many dismissals—and resignations—and the bizarre manner in which some were carried out, however, that raised most of the interest in CPR and the Journal, at least among Washington newsmen.

Founder Quits

Even the man who started it—Thomas N. Schroth, for 14 years editor of the respected Congressional Quarterly—quit under pressure. Nobody will give the reason and it is understood Schroth signed an agreement not to talk about the dispute as a condition of CPR's buying the remainder of his contract.

Not so, however, Robert Cooney, former labor editor for the Journal—and for 10 years associate editor of the AFL-CIO Federationist. He was called by then

managing editor (now editor) Cliff Sessions to the office on a Sunday and fired retroactively to the previous Friday.

And Joseph Foote, former legal editor of CQ. He was invited to breakfast at the Mayflower by F. Randall Smith, CPR board chairman—and fired.

For a while, it seemed to some, people just disappeared, including about 15 leading staff members.

Said one staff member who still works there: "We never know exactly who has left or why, because they never announce anything. People just

disappear. Sometimes you hear rumors that a reporter has been fired; other time the rumors come first and then he's fired."

But whether they left under fire or quit—or if they are still employed there—CPR staff members seem agreed that at least in its inception, the center and National Journal basically represent a good idea.

Formed Last Year

The Center for Political Research was formed in early 1969 by Schroth and his two backers—J. Randall Smith and Anthony C. Stout. They believed that because the federal government is so vast and complex, and the volume of information it provides has become so immense, those who must keep up with government activities are faced with time-consuming sorting and analytical problems.

To overcome this, CPR provides—on a contract basis—a constantly updated computerized file of relevant facts concerning government. Some of this material is published weekly in National Journal, which CPR considers "a readable summary of information."

Journal subscribers—those who pay \$1,050 a year—also get 48 computer query units included. One unit might supply a biography of an individual in government and a listing of the programs he directs. For 36 units, the computer might produce a 40-page research report on federal water pollution control programs. On a contract basis, such a report would probably cost \$500—and CPR would explore specified areas within it for an additional fee.

Management contends the magazine is more than just a lot of government handouts. "Our organization is focusing not so much on an event or an issue, but on its environment—the political forces at work both inside and outside of government," Sessions told an interviewer.

A recent issue, for example, explored Peter M. Flanagan, one of President Nixon's principal aides; examined the resignation of Health, Education and Welfare aide Leon E. Panetta, and discussed New Mexico politics. An early issue contained an in-depth study of the Federal Communications Commission, including biographies of key staff members, key commission votes and an unusual chart outlining the performance of hearing examiners.

Rumors Rampant

As with many new publications, the Journal has consistently been surrounded with rumors it was not going to make it. Smith said in a recent interview, however, that while about \$1 million of his and Stout's money already had gone into the center, "we are quite confident we have enough money to make the thing go."

Much of the money came from the sale of a computer peripheral equipment manufacturer in which he invested in 1967. "It was a broken-down, bankrupt company," Smith said. But within two years he

and other investors had bankrolled it, found new management and sold it.

Before organizing CPR and its magazine, Smith and Stout tried unsuccessfully to buy Congressional Quarterly.

As a result, he hired Schroth, some of his friends and—when the administration changed, Cliff Sessions, former Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark's public information director—set up a new service.

For about eight months the fledgling group scoured Washington gathering stories for a magazine that—while it went to press—never got out of the building. For newsmen used to having their copy read these were frustrating days.

But, as one former employee recalls, "In the early months it was enormously exciting. We were putting together a brilliant staff. It was one of the really exciting experiences of my journalistic career."

Argument Reported

Apparently, however, Schroth and Smith began to argue. "The real problem was that Randy wouldn't let Tom Schroth do anything—like setting up a sales program, or start culling our list for charter subscribers... He (Smith) just started insinuating himself more and more. He and Tom had a big fight at one point about two copyboys we hired. The line between editor and ownership became blurred."

Schroth was shunted further aside, with Smith making most of the management decisions and Sessions running the magazine.

The wave of dismissals and resignations apparently largely ended last January when Schroth resigned and Sessions was named editor.

Can CPR succeed? While conceding the operation has "had a turnover," Sessions said it's partly the result of the magazine's own personnel policies. "We started out looking